

# AMAA news



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**KHOREN AND SHOOSHANIG AVEDISIAN  
SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY CENTER  
and the  
KRIKOR AND BEATRICE BILEZIKIAN BUILDING**

Opening September 1, 2014

Dedication Ceremony October 8, 2014



# Education

## A Commitment to a Praise-Worthy Cause

Levon Filian

**W**e venture to say that the value of education for the Armenians flourished in the 5th century when St. Sahag and St. Mesrob saw the importance of educating the public. They invented the Armenian alphabet, translated the Bible into Armenian, called it the queen of translations, and opened schools. Education for the Armenians was founded on Biblical principles, "For gaining wisdom and instruction, for understanding words of insight." (Proverbs 1:2) This was the renaissance or the golden age of Armenians.



American, British and German Missionaries believed that education was the best means to improve the lives of the Armenians in Turkish occupied Armenia. Hence, in the 19th century, they opened orphanages, schools and colleges to provide a God centered quality education with biblical and moral standards, with strong work ethics.

Since the Armenian Genocide, the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) has been instrumental in providing the leadership and financial support to over 25 Armenian Evangelical Schools in the Middle East and around the world.

"The tree is known by its fruit," says the Bible. In all instances, at all times, schools have played a pivotal role in shaping Armenians in their development and growth as good citizens, in leadership, in culture, in economics and in education, by producing leaders in each of these fields.

As it was true then, it is true today, that through proper education we can help each person maximize his or her potential to become a lifelong learner. Education helps a person to grow as a critical thinker in social, cultural and spiritual aspects, seeking what is good for all citizens, what is good for society and most of all, for Christians, and what is God's plan in our lives.

Education prepares students for the workforce and to compete in the global market place, thereby providing a better livelihood for the learner and contributing to the growth of the economy, both locally and globally. Education creates an atmosphere to understand and appreciate different cultural values, differences of opinion, and to help students become better listeners, better followers and leaders, and hence better citizens for the wellbeing of all, and not just the privileged few.

Today, the AMAA makes a statement and a declaration that through building a state of the art school in Armenia and providing quality education to our youth, it will remain true to its mission. We invite each and every Armenian to partner with us with your prayers, financial support and participation to make The Avedisian School and Community Center a learning institution that will bear fruit, and prepare a generation of citizens who will contribute to the wellbeing of their homeland and around the world.

We take this opportunity to thank Edward and Pamela Avedisian, Charles and Doreen Bilezikian and all those who have participated in the dream and realization of this educational institution. Thank you! □

*Shooshanig and Khoren Avedisian*

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# Why Give To The Avedisian School?

Rev. Mgrdich Melkonian

**W**hen we look back at the history of the Armenian Evangelicals we see that the leaders recognized the importance of education. The pioneers and the founders of the Armenian Evangelical Church planted many churches and education centers next to these churches. We see this same picture in Lebanon and Syria today. The Biblical teaching in Proverbs 22, "Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it," has been taken very seriously.

The Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) has been faithfully following the same education ministry for over 95 years. In the list of AMAA projects, education has been a very significant one. Although it is not one of the largest missionary organizations, the AMAA is building the most advanced,

both technologically and architecturally, high school in one of the poorest neighborhoods of Yerevan, Armenia, thanks to the wise visionary leaders and very generous donors.

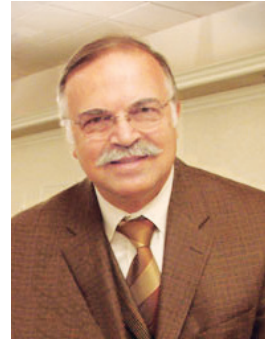
Just imagine that below average families will have the opportunity to send their children to the Avedisian School and Community Center in the South Eastern District of Yerevan. The AMAA is planning to raise the educational level by recruiting and training the best teachers so that the new generation in Yerevan will have not only a beautiful "green" building, but also the best possible education available. The Avedisian School will register any student, find out the best in them and give them an education which will open up the future for them as well as for our beloved Armenia.

The AMAA is building the Avedisian School and Community Center in faith,

trusting and believing that there are many wonderful people who wholeheartedly believe in education, who love Armenia and are willing to support and help build the School to benefit our children.

I kindly ask you to prayerfully consider helping the AMAA in support of the Avedisian School and Community Center. The School will open its doors on September 1, 2014 as planned. Until then, there is a lot to be done and funds to raise. The opening ceremonies are scheduled for October 8, 2014 and I invite you to be part of it.

We thank God for you and for your contribution. Thank you in advance for your generous support. □



*Avedisian School students during the first day of the current school year (September 2013).*



*Gold Medal awarded to Avedisian School by the Ministry of Education of Armenia for the best administered school in all Armenia.*



# The Avedisian School and Community Center To Be Dedicated On October 8, 2014

Joseph Zeronian, Ed.D.

**T**he largest physical project ever undertaken by the AMAA will be completed in September of this year and is scheduled for an opening ceremony on October 8. The Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian School and Community Center including the Krikor and Beatrice Bilezikian Elementary Building will open its doors to 570 students for a Kindergarten through 11th-grade education. (A 12th-grade will be added next year.) The award-winning School will now have facilities to match the talent and abilities of its students and faculty.

The Avedisian School has been in existence since 1999 and provides a sound and award-winning education to children, Kindergarten through the 9th grade on a non-sectarian basis. The School is in the "Bangladesh" neighborhood of Yerevan, Armenia, considered by some to be populated by the neediest in Yerevan. Through the efforts of the faculty under the direction of Melanya Geghamyan, the School has thrived. Its current facilities are cramped and inadequate for the expansion into high school education.

The new facilities are constructed on five acres in the same general area as the current site. In addition to classrooms, the new building includes an auditorium, gymnasium, library, and cafeteria. There is substantial outdoor space so that students will be able to participate in a variety of sports and physical activity.

Pamela and Ed Avedisian and Chuck and Doreen Bilezikian have given substantial gifts toward the completion of this project and the AMAA has raised about \$1.1 million from our supporters around the world. To keep its commitment to this project, the AMAA must

raise an additional \$2.9 million for the construction of the building as well as an added \$2 million for an endowment for operations.

The campus of this School, in my view, is destined to be the center of many activities beyond education. It will become, I believe, the symbol of the AMAA in Yerevan. There will be after-school religious education, concerts, lectures and services in the auditorium, and team sports in the gymnasium and on the fields surrounding the school buildings.

I ask every person who supports the AMAA to be a part of this wonderful project and to contribute and/or pledge gifts for its completion and operations. There is a listing elsewhere in this issue of the classrooms and other facilities that can be supported by you and will be named as you designate. Your gift will have lasting impact as this facility and the school activities which it enables will benefit young Armenians for decades to come.

Many of you are aware that the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions built 16 colleges and hundreds of elementary schools in Turkey and the Near East during the 19th century and the years preceding the First World War. The Euphrates College in Kharpert was built in 1852 for \$140,000 with substantial support from people in the United States. That College supported Armenian young people, providing them with a sound education, for more than 60 years. To me, supporting this new facility is our way of impacting the young people of Armenia for years to come. Education is an investment in the future. Will you join me in supporting this outstanding project with a gift that will have lasting effect? ☐



*Exterior view of the Middle School.*



# Building For The Future

Edward Avedisian

**T**he campus for the Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian School and Community Center (ASCC) opens on September 1, 2014.

It started as a simple gesture in August of 1994 on the occasion of my mother Shooshanig's 90th birthday. She didn't really want a party, but, since the family was going to go ahead with one anyway, her requests were to make it simple and to have no gifts because "I have everything I need and I could pass away tomorrow." So what could we do that could possibly please her and us? My siblings Paramaz, Zvart, Paul and I spent much time discussing the matter and reminiscing over her life to try to find some way to honor her life that would truly make her happy.

We knew that both of our parents placed an extremely high value on education, what with our father's early training for the priesthood and mother's fond memories of her education in the German Missionary Orphanage in Kharpert, where she met so many of the friends with whom she would remain in contact for the rest of her life. Could we make an exceptional education and the opportunity to form lasting friendships a possibility for those who had little to look forward to? If we could make this happen, it would surely please her and us as well.

The celebration of Shooshanig's 90th birthday was truly a momentous occasion, with over 100 people in attendance, including long-time friends from near and far. A representative from the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) was also in attendance to help share the news of how we

were going to honor her life and remember our late father, Khoren, both of whom, in spite of limited means, had given us so much for which to be thankful. And so the idea for the Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian School was born. It would, we hoped, open soon in a poor neighborhood in Armenia, conforming to the standard of education as set forth by the Armenian Ministry of Education and operated by the AMAA.

The word "soon" took on a truly Armenian connotation as a protracted search for a suitable building ensued. We had looked long and hard in many areas when I got a call that the Malatya-Sepastya District (located about 15 miles southwest of Yerevan) would give us a free-use, 99-year lease on a Soviet-style building which had housed a kindergarten. It was pointed out that it was in a very poor, rough and tough neighborhood; without hesitation I replied, "Great, that's exactly where the school should be." The building had been closed for some years and was extremely dilapidated. After necessary repairs were made in order to get the school up and running, finally, after five years, on September 20, 1999, the Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian School opened with a kindergarten of 75 students – 25 each of 3-, 4- and 5-year olds. Yes, the school was now open; but the question was did it have a future?



*First class of Kindergarten 3-4-5 year olds - 1999*





*Shooshanig Avedisian at her 90th birthday with her children. L to R: Zvart, Paramaz, Paul and Edward.*

The AMAA had hired a young and energetic Principal, Melanya Geghamyan, who espoused the highest standards of education. My wife Pamela and I met her the day before the school opened and she was more than just excited as something she had dreamt was about to become a reality. I can say at this point that Melanya has proved herself to be the kind of principal that school departments dream about. It was soon very clear that the school was gaining a reputation for excellence, as people were coming from all around the area to have their children enrolled in the school. However, the school was meant for the children in the depressed area in which it was put; and space was extremely limited. Signs had to be put on the doors and windows to explain that if you were not living in this area, you could not apply for enrollment. This did not stop the newly-arrived Ambassador from Lebanon from calling the school, saying that he had heard about it in Lebanon and wanted his two children to be enrolled. Much to his surprise that request was denied.

As each year a new grade was being added on so that the students could continue their education, it became obvious that we would soon be out of space. With that I invited my good friend and colleague at the American University of Armenia, Dr. Mihran Agabian, who was an engineer, to come and inspect the building. After a thorough inspection, I asked what needed to be done to both get the building in shape and to expand it. His remark in a word was "a bulldozer." It was clear that a new facility would be needed soon and that was ten years ago. So off we went again, looking for land in the area.

Meanwhile, the school was continuing to gain in reputation, and was awarded a Gold Medal for the best administered school in all of Armenia by the Ministry of Education. This award is given only once every five years and was quite an honor for this



*Pamela Avedisian addressing the audience in Armenian on opening day in 1999.*



*Rev. Movses B. Janbazian, AMAA Executive Director (1987-2000), addressing the audience on opening day in 1999.*



*American University of Armenia President, Dr. Harout Armenian on opening day in 1999 with Rev. Movses B. Janbazian.*



young institution. In addition the school's Russian Language Team took first prize two years in a row in country-wide competition. The French Language Team, the Math Team and the Dramatic Arts Group have also taken first prizes over the years.

It wasn't until 2009 that a suitable piece of land was found and purchased for the school. By 2011 the school was bursting at the seams and every available inch of space was being utilized, to the point where, after the 9th grade, the students were parceled out to other high schools. Those schools were ecstatic to be getting students from the Avedisian School, as they said that even our lowest-scoring students were better than their best students.

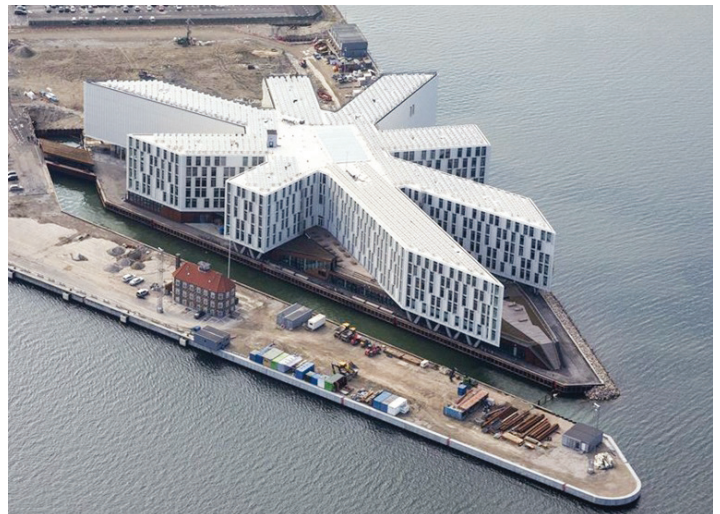
## Fast Forward to the Present

We had set out originally to have a first-class building and we had the plans drawn up for it. However, after some discussion with architect Ronald Altoon, Dr. Kenell Touryan (see articles

by both) and Richard Youatt, my accountant for the project, I concluded that given the success we had building the state-of-the-art Paramaz Avedisian Building at AUA (the American University of Armenia), we should continue and expand on those elements of sustainable design. With that, an international certification from LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) became our goal. Earlier, Jeanmarie Papelian had introduced me to the Armenian Ambassador to the United Nations, the Honorable Garen Nazarian. He was very interested in the idea and said he would help by arranging a meeting at the United Nations with the UNDP (United Nations Development Program) in hopes of garnering their support for the project. It turned out that the UNDP was more than just interested and gave us a grant for \$50,000. They also funded a trip to Copenhagen, Denmark, for me and Dr. Armen Gharibyan, our engineer and licensed LEED expert (see pictures). The point of the visit was to see their new UN City Building which was close to completion. In inspecting



*Full view of the future Avedisian School and Community Center campus.*



*UN City Building by day.* (photo by Dr. Armen Gharibyan)



*UN City Building by night. The similarity of both the Avedisian School and the new UN City in Copenhagen is that all buildings of both structures are tied together and accessible without having to leave the building.* (photo by Dr. Armen Gharibyan)



it we would have the advantage of seeing how this new LEED building was being constructed and gain further knowledge for our own project.

However, going for LEED Certification didn't come free as this added to the cost of the project; and it became very difficult to convince the AMAA Board to approve it. In addition to helping sustain the environment, the main advantage of LEED was the many thousands of dollars it would save the organization in annual operational expenses. The bottom line was that the added construction costs would be paid back in 5-7 years, but huge savings would continue to go forward every year. That feature carried the day and funding was approved; hence, this school will now become the first LEED-certified building, not only in Armenia, but in the entire region. So onward and upward we went and continue to go, as you can see on the cover of this issue.

I should add that Madame Cihan Sultanoğlu, the UNDP Assistant Director for Europe and the CIS States, became more than just interested when she asked if there was an auditorium in the building and what its seating capacity was. When I told her that we would have an auditorium that seated 250 she quickly asked, "Can the UNDP hold its biennial regional meeting there?" I told her yes, that it would be an honor to have her and the entire regional delegation in our building for their meeting, the delegates of which come from countries extending from Portugal to Japan. As she explained, she wanted all the representatives to come, see, feel and move around in the reality of sustainable design, a low-carbon footprint and low-cost building. This AMAA Avedisian School would serve as the ideal model.

## The Dream Team

Putting this project together was possible because of the "dream team" committee that we have had. Most of this committee had experience working together in constructing the Paramaz Avedisian Building at AUA; and it didn't take much to convince



*Pictured in the new UN City Lobby in Copenhagen: L to R: Bradley Busetto, UNDP Armenia Representative; Camilla Bruckner, UNDP Director Nordic Representation Office; Edward Avedisian, Stine Junge, UNDP Nordic Private Sector Office; Dr. Armen Gharibyan, Avedisian Building Engineer and LEED expert.*

them to take on a new task. When I approached Faraj Yeretsyan to be our project manager, he emailed the following: "we confirm our commitment to excellence on the Avedisian School project; and as I have mentioned many times before, this project is our baby."

The professional expertise and personal interest of Charles Bilezikian has been something none of us could duplicate. I met "Chuck" at an AMAA Board Meeting. I observed him sitting there with his arms folded across his chest, expressionless. It became quite apparent when he started speaking, that he had been listening intently. He was always soft spoken and would start by saying, "This is what I am hearing," and would continue on with solutions to problems that were analytical, thorough and to the point.

A major development in this project has been the gift of the Krikor and Beatrice Bilezikian Building by Chuck in honor of his parents, which will house grades K-4 of the Avedisian School. With this addition, the Avedisian High School grew into



*Bradley Busetto, UNDP Armenia Representative, with Edward Avedisian, Chair of Avedisian School and Community Center Building Committee.*



the Avedisian School and Community Center. The complex is now complete with seven interconnected buildings (as is the case with the UN City in Copenhagen (see picture)). The AMAA is indebted to Charles Bilezikian and his family for its unwavering support and interest for those in need. Our association quickly developed into a friendship that continues to this day and, together with his wife Doreen, is a relationship that I truly treasure.

In addition to Faraj and Chuck, our committee has been blessed with our Senior Advisor Ronald Altoon, Jeanmarie Papelian, our expert in many areas, Dr. Kenell Touryan in Conservation, and Richard Youatt, our Project Accountant. I would like to again mention Dr. Armen Gharibyan, who, although not on the committee, is certainly part of the dream team. What most don't know is that Dr. Gharibyan was an AMAA and AGBU Scholarship student at AUA. He is one of those young and bright lights in Armenia that no one ever hears about but he is carrying an extremely heavy load in getting us to a LEED

Silver Certificate. He has designed a unique solar system that will provide heat, hot water and power for the air conditioning. Nowhere in the world have all three been combined successfully. Last, but certainly not least, are the workers at the construction site, who feel that this is their building and continue to work each day with a dedication and expertise that is really something to experience. Hats off and kudos go to each of the above.

## The Future

So what's in the future for these poor students? Does education stop with a high school diploma? Thankfully not, because, if a student wishes, he or she can continue on to the American University of Armenia, tuition-free, as long as the entrance exam is passed. As a trustee of AUA, I look forward with pleasure, to the day when I can put a diploma in the hand of an Avedisian School student as he/she crosses the stage to graduate from AUA. Well done, Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian! □

# Avedisian School Meets the LEED Certification Requirement

Kenell Touryan, Ph.D.

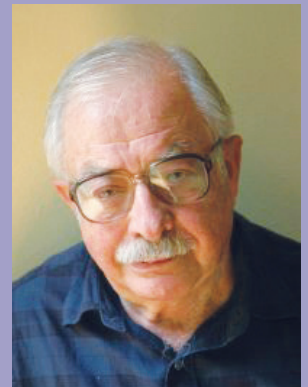
My responsibility on the Avedisian School and Community Center (ASCC) Board has been to assist the team on issues of energy management for the School. I am actively participating in the process of securing the LEED Silver Certification of the building. To that end, I am working with



*Partial Exterior view of the High School and Bilezikian buildings.*

Richard Youatt and Dr. Armen Gharibyan to ensure that the building meets minimum energy efficiency criteria and makes use of renewable technologies to meet its need for hot water, using solar, and part of its electricity needs by using photovoltaic power (PV). We were able to secure funds from the Turpanjan Family Foundation to purchase and install a 10kW PV system for the School. We are pursuing the feasibility of expanding the solar hot water system to provide space heating to the School in winter and air conditioning during the hot summers in Yerevan.

Armen was one of my brightest graduate students at AUA who became interested in solar technologies. With me as his advisor, Armen wrote his MS thesis on solar thermal systems for Armenia. He has since excelled in applying his knowledge of solar energy technologies to the ASCC building and is now the lead person in ensuring that the building meets the LEED Certification requirement. □





# Energy Efficient Building Sets New Standards in Yerevan

Ronald A. Altoon, FAIA, LEED AP\*

**W**hen I received the call from Edward Avedisian entreating me to contribute my time and expertise to assist the AMAA by reviewing the efforts of a local architectural firm designing a new elementary/middle/high school in the "Bangladesh" neighborhood of Yerevan, I was overjoyed. Working with Ed on the design of the AUA Paramaz Avedisian Building had been one of the most gratifying experiences of my professional life. To collaborate on a second building in Armenia was as unexpected an opportunity as it would also be rewarding.

By coincidence, or perhaps happenstance, I learned we would be working with the same architectural team that my firm mentored both in Yerevan and in my offices in Los Angeles some years before. Bright, eager to learn, and technically skilled, my professional exchange with them would be most gratifying, particularly as they had recently established their own entrepreneurial practice.

Ed's mandate at AUA, and with this building as well, was that the entire process of design and construction, and the experience of occupying the new building would itself provide an education that would inform those whose lives it would intersect. This was an insightful contribution, and one most worthy of supporting without question.

But, I did have one condition. It was fueled by our work at AUA, where our passive and active design solutions produced a highly energy-efficient building. Armenia continues to operate in the context of an insurmountable energy deficit, dependent on a single Chernobyl style nuclear power plant. There are often power outages. If I was to offer my time, I suggested that the building should be designed to meet the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED Certification requirements. In short, it had to become a "green" building, having the lowest carbon footprint possible. LEED Certification requires a demonstrated effort to manage natural and man-made resources decisions efficiently and effectively in six major areas—Sustainable Sites, Water Efficiency, Energy & Atmosphere, Materials & Resources, Indoor Environmental Quality and Innovation. It results in building healthier places and creating a symbiotic relationship with the environment.

Ed was intrigued with the idea, and wanted more information. I provided the rather lengthy, six chapter LEED Certification guidelines for his review. His budding interest soon grew to abject enthusiasm. The entire building team — Ed, Construction Manager Faraj Yeretsyan, Isahak Nersisyan of NST Architects, the Building Committee and our third party Commissioning Agent — embraced this mandate. When dedicated this October 8th,

the AMAA Avedisian School and Community Center together with the Krikor and Beatrice Bilezikian Elementary Building will become the first LEED Certified buildings not only in Armenia, but also in the entire region. And, the complex should qualify for LEED Gold Certification as well.

I visited the construction site in early November with Ed, Isakak, Faraj, and a few others. It was gratifying to see the absolute dedication of the general contractor and his sub-contractors to assure the project complies with the very stringent sustainability requirements. Representatives from the Armenia Tree Project toured on the same day, as they will lend their efforts there as well. Later, when I visited with an old colleague, Noreg Sarkisyan, the former City Architect of Yerevan who had been helpful in the approval process, he spoke favorably about AMAA's special commitment to Armenia with this energy-efficient building.

The holistic approach to this project reminded me of the haunting admonition given by the great Dr. Jonas Salk to The American Institute of Architects Board of Directors. Speaking with reflection, he said, "Let us be good ancestors to our grandchildren." With this building, the AMAA will contribute visibly and measurably to fulfilling that ethical mandate. □

*\* Senior Advisor, Avedisian Building Committee*



*The exterior windows of the High School.*



# Chuck and Doreen Bilezikian

Levon Filian

**C**harles (Chuck) and Doreen Bilezikian have been friends and supporters of the Armenian Missionary Association of America for many years and Chuck has served on its Board of Directors.

"In thankfulness for the goodness of God and the mission of the AMAA, I wish to donate \$ for [a project] sponsored and supported by the AMAA." These are the words by which Chuck and Doreen Bilezikian start their letter of intent to support a worthy project. They are thankful for God's abundant blessing upon them. One of these blessings is that every year for the last 80 years, the Bilezikian/Kasparian family gets together at the hall of the Armenian Memorial Church in Watertown, Massachusetts to celebrate Thanksgiving. It is a tradition and a testimony for the Bilezikian/Kasparian family that unites four generations.

Chuck's parents, Krikor and Beatrice, fled from Marash and Harput, Turkey during the Turkish Genocide against the Armenians and settled in the United States in 1920. From humble backgrounds, they were grateful for the freedom they enjoyed in this country – freedom to work, to worship and to raise children with strong Christian and work ethics – and they passed these values on to their children.

Chuck and Doreen, a hard working couple, are indeed a testimony that the United States is a land of opportunity. From a single store called The Christmas Tree Shops, they were able to expand and open a chain of stores in several states. They are blessed with two sons, Gregory, married to Wendy with four children, Lindsay, Kate, Chad and Mia; and Jeffrey, married to Nancy with two children, Beatrice and Frieda.

My wife Liliana and I had the wonderful opportunity to travel to Armenia with Chuck, Doreen and Jeffrey. We visited several of the AMAA sponsored projects to which the Bilezikians have contributed. These include the Avedisian School and Community Center under construction, Camp

Hankavan, the Gyumri Center, the dental clinic and the bakery in Vanadzor, the orphanage, the Armenian Tree Project and the Perkins School for the Blind. One of the highlights of the trip was our visit to the Bilezikian School in Shushi, Karabagh and the opening ceremonies of the Bilezikian Playground with great fanfare. While there, the Bilezikians were invited to meet with President Pago Sahakyan and Archbishop Barkev Martirosyan. Harout Nercessian, the AMAA's Field Representative in Armenia, was "impressed with Chuck's humility and down-to-earth personality. His friendly and modest personality is well-balanced with his business-minded approach to projects. Chuck and Doreen's philanthropy have brought joy and much needed assistance to thousands of children and adults in Armenia and Karabagh."

After visiting many projects and programs in Armenia, Chuck and Doreen made generous contributions toward the construction of the Elementary Building at the Avedisian School and Community Center to be named after Krikor and Beatrice Bilezikian (Chuck's parents), and later a donation for the Library in the High School Building. They have also made additional contributions for the remodeling of the Bilezikian Kindergarten and the adjacent playground in Shushi, Karabagh. Chuck and Doreen believe that through education a child can become a better citizen and can give to society more than it receives.

Their Pastor, Rev. Avedis Boynerian, said, "The best way for me to describe Charles and Doreen is that they are inseparable and have a future looking perspective."

AMAA Board members Joe and Joyce Stein describe them as "generous in every facet of their lives."

Sam Chekijian, a long-time friend, explains, "Chuck is the most ethical and humble man that I know. He is a family man whose greatest pleasure is to be with his children and grandchildren."

"We are looking forward to visiting Armenia in the near future with our children, their spouses and our grandchildren," said Chuck and Doreen.

We at the AMAA have benefitted greatly from the generous contributions of time, encouragement and resources that we have received from the Bilezikian family. □



*Chuck, Krikor, Nancy and Beatrice Bilezikian.*



*Chuck Bilezikian (second from left) at the ASCC construction site.*



# The AMAA Board's Commitment: A Daring Act of Faith

Nurhan Helvacian, Ph.D.

**T**he AMAA Board's commitment to build the Avedisian School and Community Center was nothing less than a daring act of faith. This new campus will serve grades K-12 of the Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian School, with grades K-4 housed in the Krikor and Beatrice Bilezikian Building. The Campus will open its doors on September 1, 2014 to nearly six hundred students. The faithful commitment is not new to the AMAA, as the Association has a long tradition of building, operating and supporting schools all over the Middle East, Armenia, the United States and many other parts of the world.

The Board's initial commitment to the School goes back nearly two decades, when with Edward Avedisian's initiative, the elementary school opened its doors to Armenian children in the poorest section of Yerevan. The School was named for Mr. Avedisian's parents and it would educate Armenian children who would otherwise be reared in a Soviet style public school system. For the first time, Armenian toddlers and youngsters would be introduced to daily prayers and receive education from top notch teachers who were committed to achieving excellence for their pupils.

Over the years, the elementary school grew in size, attracting many students from all over the city, and winning awards for excellence. More grades were added through the middle school. Along with this expansion, the AMAA Board decided to purchase a property in the same section of Yerevan to construct a new school building. The purchase of the property was accomplished through generous donations from Edward Avedisian and Charles Bilezikian. The Board's intention was to build a state of the art school structure to house K through high school grades.

Next was a difficult phase of introspection for the Board, when members asked seemingly sensible questions regarding building costs and the need for a high school. These were indeed difficult questions, the answers for which only the Almighty could provide. Ultimately, the Christian virtues of hope and optimism prevailed. In 2011, the Board resolved to build the high school and then the following year to build the Bilezikian Building for K-4 of the School.

The two buildings will cost \$11.3 million to construct. Mr. Avedisian has taken the leadership in funding the high school construction, which will cost \$9.9 million and Mr. Bilezikian in funding the elementary school building construction, which will cost \$1.4 million. Mr. Avedisian has also taken on the responsibility for overseeing the physical construction of both buildings, assembling a team of internationally noted expert builders,

architects and financial controllers. He has also pledged to cover the entire cost to equip and furnish the buildings.

The AMAA's obligation toward the actual construction costs of the two buildings is \$3.7 million; \$3.2 million for the high school and \$500,000 for the elementary school.

In addition, the AMAA is responsible for setting up a \$2.1 million endowment fund, income from which will be used to cover the future operating costs of the School. To date, the AMAA has raised about \$1.3 million toward the construction costs from various other donors, including \$300,000 from the John Mirak Foundation. Still, additional funds need to be raised, \$2.4 million for the construction and \$2.1 million for the endowment fund. Quite a challenge, but one that the Board is fully committed to undertake and meet!

The AMAA Board is excited and looking forward to the School's opening ceremonies this fall, which will include a sizable delegation of Board members and their families. The nearly completed campus with its magnificent design and state of the art technology for energy conservation is attracting international recognition and accolades. Looking back, these achievements are truly miraculous. The School's planned opening this year is a testament that the AMAA Board and membership are Christians of today who truly believe all is possible with faith in the Lord. □



*Interior Works.*



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# AMAA and Armenia Tree Project Collaborate to Bring Environmental Education to Avedisian School Students

## New Campus Will be Armenia's First LEED Certified Building

Jeanmarie Papelian, Esq.



The Armenia Tree Project (ATP), headquartered in Watertown, Massachusetts, has been working to protect Armenia's environment since 1994. To further that mission, ATP developed an environmental educational curriculum for students of Armenian schools. Christine Gevorgyan, a science teacher at the AMAA's Avedisian School, trained with ATP to learn this curriculum and has adopted it in her work with students. Ms. Gevorgyan reports that her students love this aspect of her teaching. "They are happy to learn that they can help make Armenia a healthier place to live."

In addition to collaborating on the environmental education curriculum, the ATP and the AMAA are collaborating on one of the Avedisian School project's most interesting features, the green roof gardens. Grasses, trees and even vegetables planted atop the building will provide insulation, lowering heating and cooling costs. The most interesting and cost saving feature of the roofs is the conservation of water which



*L to R: Phyllis Dohanian, former Director of AMAA Development and Marketing; Edward Avedisian, AMAA Board member and Avedisian School Benefactor; Jeanmarie Papelian, Co-Chair of AMAA Development Committee; Jill Mirak Kew and Bob Mirak of the Mirak Foundation.*



*ATP President, Carolyn Mugar, center, visited the Avedisian School's construction site in November 2013. Pictured L to R: Isahak Nercessian, NST Architect of the School, Ronald Altoon, Senior Advisor, Carolyn Mugar, ATP President, Tom Garabedian, ATP Managing Director, and Edward Avedisian, Chairman of the Building Committee.*



collects the rainwater on the roofs by entering a pipe which then transports the water through the building to a filtering system underground where it is filtered and stored in a huge underground tank. It is then used to water plants, shrubs, flush toilets and provide water for the grass on the soccer field. The green roof gardens will also assist in decreasing storm water run-offs which can overwhelm sewage systems and carry pollutants into nearby waterways. It will also be used as a hands on teaching tool for conservation as the students help care for the plants and observe their growth.

The new campus of the Avedisian School and Community Center will be Armenia's first LEED Certified building. The building will conserve energy in many unique ways. Funding for the LEED Certification process was generously provided to the AMAA by the John Mirak Foundation of Massachusetts. Julia Mirak Kew, a Trustee of the Mirak Foundation, notes that the Foundation "has committed to preserving Armenia by funding organizations that focus on issues surrounding environmental sustainability, reforestation and education at all levels." Ms. Kew is also a Trustee of the Armenia Tree Project. During the construction process, she and other representatives of the Armenia Tree Project have visited the site to observe the many construction techniques and features which make the campus green and will qualify it for LEED Certification. □



*Christine Gevorgyan, Teacher and Melanya Geghamyan, Principal of Avedisian School.*



## Let's Play Soccer

Jeanmarie Papelian, Esq.

**L**ike many Armenian children, the students of the Avedisian School love to play soccer. At the old School, they had no choice but to play on the hard pavement. The new Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian School and Community Center campus will feature a state of the art grass soccer field, surrounded by a top-quality track. These features, which will enable the School to provide excellent physical education to match its superior academic instruction, were made possible by a generous donation from Asadour and Audrey Izmirlian.







*Avedisian School Principal Melanya Geghamyan, welcoming students on the first day of the school year.*



*Some of the Avedisian School Armenia Board members with Edward and Pamela Avedisian.*



*Avedisian School staff*



*Avedisian School Faculty*



## ***Thank you to the many generous donors who have made the new Avedisian School and Community Center campus possible.***

### **\$5,000,000 and above**

Mr. & Mrs. Edward Avedisian

### **\$1,000,000 and above**

Mr. & Mrs. Charles Bilezikian

### **\$250,000 and above**

The John Mirak Foundation

Estate of Bessie Ruzian

### **\$100,000 and above**

Mr. & Mrs. Asadour Izmirlian

Dr. & Mrs. Edward Karian †

The Church of God at Pasadena

The Sirpuhe & John Conte Foundation

Estate of Mary Marderosian Mast

### **\$50,000 and above**

Dr. Susan Jerian and Dr. David Essayan

*in memory of Rev. Ephraim and Mrs. Marie Jernazian*

Dr. & Mrs. Edward Onanian

United Nations Development Programme

### **\$10,000 and above**

The Annenberg Foundation

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Estate of Margaret Kassouny

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Dr. Carol and Antonio Perez, Esq.

Sarkisian Foundation

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*In memory of Hagop Terjimanian*

TF Educational Foundation

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Mr. & Mrs. Armand Avakian

Mr. & Mrs. Donald Bravo

Mr. & Mrs. David Butler

*in memory of Agnes & Arthur Keshishian*

Ms. Phyllis Dohanian

*in memory of Makrouhi Koumrian*

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Mr. & Mrs. John Talbourdet

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Ms. Anju Bhagwagar

*in memory of Karl Turekian*

Ararat Armenian Congregational Church

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*in memory of Hamazasb & Zarouhy Avedisian*

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*in memory of Araxi Kalajian*  
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 Mrs. Shakeh Young  
 Ms. Houry Youssoufian  
 Mr. Edward Zanazanian  
 Dr. Ronald W. Zartarian  
 Mr. & Mrs. Nauver Zerounian

† deceased



## Khoren & Shooshanig Avedisian School and Community Center Naming Opportunities

	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Committed</u>
*Krikor and Beatrice Bilezikian .....	\$750,000	\$750,000	<i>Mr. &amp; Mrs. Charles Bilezikian</i>
Building ( <i>Elementary School</i> )			
Gymnasium .....	\$300,000	\$300,000	
Cafeteria* .....	\$300,000	\$300,000	
Kitchen* .....	\$125,000	\$125,000	
Auditorium .....	\$125,000	\$125,000	<i>Dr. &amp; Mrs. Edward Karian</i>
Library .....	\$125,000	\$125,000	<i>Mr. &amp; Mrs. Charles Bilezikian</i>
Soccer Field .....	\$125,000	\$125,000	<i>Asadour &amp; Audrey Izmirlian</i>
Lobby .....	\$125,000	\$125,000	
Hall .....	\$85,000	\$85,000	
Chemistry Classroom & Lab .....	\$50,000	\$50,000	<i>Dr. Susian Jerian and Dr. David Essayan</i> <i>in memory of Rev. Ephraim and</i> <i>Mrs. Marie Jernazian</i>
Physics Classroom & Lab .....	\$50,000	\$100,000	<i>Asadour &amp; Audrey Izmirlian</i>
Biology Classroom & Lab .....	\$50,000	\$50,000	<i>The Sirpuhe and John Conte Foundation</i>
Computer Classroom .....	\$50,000	\$50,000	<i>The Sirpuhe and John Conte Foundation</i>
Art Classroom .....	\$35,000	\$35,000	
Music Classroom .....	\$35,000	\$35,000	<i>Louis &amp; Joanne Hagopian</i>
Military Training Classroom .....	\$35,000	\$35,000	
Foreign Languages Classroom .....	\$35,000	\$35,000	
Armenian Language Classroom .....	\$35,000	\$35,000	
Classrooms (16) .....	\$35,000	\$560,000	<i>3 Committed</i> <i>1) Dr. Carol and Antonio Perez, Esq.</i> <i>2) Dr. &amp; Mrs. Sarkis Kechejian</i> <i>3) The Zeronian Family</i>
Handcrafting Classroom (Girls) .....	\$25,000	\$25,000	
Handcrafting Classroom (Boys) .....	\$25,000	\$25,000	
Doctor's Office/First Aid Room .....	\$20,000	\$20,000	<i>Dr. &amp; Mrs. Edward Onanian</i>
Offices (3) .....	\$15,000	\$45,000	
Staff Room .....	\$15,000	\$15,000	
Teachers Room (total of 2) .....	\$15,000	\$30,000	<i>Dr. &amp; Mrs. Edward Onanian (2)</i>
Locker Rooms (2) .....	\$15,000	\$30,000	
<b>Additional Giving Opportunities</b>			
LEEDS-affiliated building expenses .....	\$300,000	\$300,000	<i>The John Mirak Foundation</i>
Green Roof Gardens .....	\$125,000	\$125,000	
Wing of the building .....	\$1,000,000		
Endowment (operational expenses) Donations to the Endowment Fund will be accepted in all amounts - Goal: \$2,100,000			
External landscaping design .....	TBD		
Piano .....			<i>Ms. Phyllis Dohanian</i> <i>in memory of Makrouhi Koumrian</i>
Lab benches .....	\$1,250/each		
White boards			
Desks/chairs			
Backpacks with supplies			

*\*If cafeteria and kitchen are given together, total amount would be \$400,000*

***For more information on how you can fund a naming opportunity for Avedisian School and Community Center, please contact the AMAA Offices at 201.265.2607 or 818.937.9840.***

# Հայ Աւետարանական Դպրոցի Դերն ու Ազդեցութիւնը

Վեր. Դոկտ. Վահան Թուրքիեան\*

Հայ դպրոցը հայ մանուկին «երկրորդ տունն» է: Անոր մէջ հայ մանուկներ ոչ միայն կրթութիւն կը ստանան, այլ նաեւ կը հաղորդուին Մեսրոպեան տառերուն հետ եւ կը սորվին իրենց Մայրենի Լեզուն, Հայոց Պատմութիւնն ու Հայ Երգը:

Հայ դպրոցին հիմնական առաքելութիւններէն մէկն է դաստիարակչական գործի արդիւնաբերումը: Այս իմաստով, ան կոչուած է մանուկն ու պատանին գիտակ դարձնելու մտաւոր եւ բարոյական զարգացման եւ առօրեայ կեանքի պայքարին պատրաստելու կարեւորութեան:

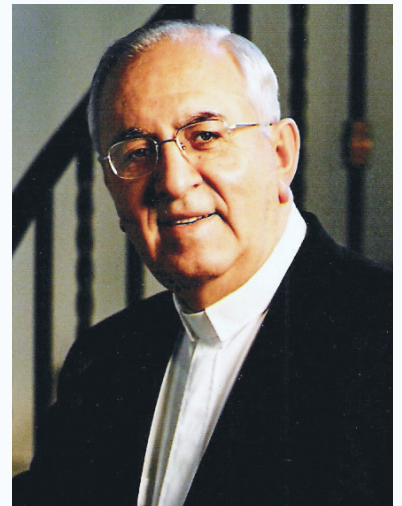
Անտարակոյս, ընտիր նկարագրի կազմութիւն, պատասխանատւութեան զգացումի գիտակցութիւն ջամբել, տիպար ֆաղափացիներ պատրաստել, գիտութիւն եւ ծանօթութիւն հայթայթել, կարեւոր տարրերն են ընտիր դաստիարակութեան: Սակայն, ասոնց հետ, եւ ասոնցմէ անբաժան, հայ դպրոցին կենսական նպատակներէն ու առաքելութիւններէն մէկն ալ հայեցի դաստիարակութիւնն է:

Հայ Աւետարանական դպրոցը այս ամէնուն հետ, եւ այս ամէնուն կողքին, նուիրուած է ֆրիստոնէական ընտիր դաստիարակութիւն ջամբելու վսեմ գործին: Քրիստոնէական դաստիարակութեան նպատակն է Աստուծոյ սրբազան խօսքով սնուցանել ու մեծցնել հայ մանուկն ու պատանին: Հայ նորահաս սերունդներու ֆրիստոնէական դաստիարակութիւնը ի վաղուց յետէ առաջնահերթ

կոչումներէն մին եղած է հայ Աւետարանական դպրոցին: Ան իր կրօքի եւ Սուրբ Գրոց դասաւանդութեամբ, իր առաւօտեան ամէնօրեայ պաշտամունքներով եւ յատուկ յայտագիրներով, կ'աշխատի այս նպատակը իրագործել:

Իր սկզբնածագ օրէն ի վեր, Հայաստանեայց Աւետարանական Եկեղեցիին կարեւոր նպատակներէն մէկը եղած է կրթական առողջ դրութեան մը զգացումը: Օտար միախռնարներու նախաձեռնութեամբ եւ հայ աւետարանականներու գործակցութեամբ, նախաձեռնութեամբ եւ աջակցութեամբ, հայ ազգը օժտուեցաւ ուսումնական-կրթական նախանձելի դրութեան մը:

Արդարեւ, 19-րդ դարու կիսուն ծնունդ առած Հայկական մշակութային զարթօնքին նախորդող շրջանին, Թուրքիոյ հայ հասարակութեան կրթական մակարդակը անբաղձելի վիճակի մէջ էր: Այդ դժբախտ իրավիճակը հիմնովին փոխելու իրականութեան մէջ, հայ աւետարանականներ բարերար դեր մը ունեցան բրփահայութեան կրթական կեանքին մէջ: Անոնք դպրոցներ հիմնելով, հայ ժողովուրդին հայթայթեցին





միջոցն ու շարժառիթը տիրանալու կրթական բարձր մակարդակի մը:

Անուրանալի իրողութիւն մըն է, որ հայ Աւետարանական դպրոցները իրենց սփռած չելի ներդրումով՝ մտաւոր եւ հոգեւոր լուսաւորութեան փառաւոր ժամանակաշրջան մը արձանագրեցին հայկական դպրագիտութեան մարզին մէջ: Մանկապարտէզէն մինչեւ գոլէմական մակարդակի հասնող Աւետարանական կրթական հաստատութիւններ լոյսի եւ օրհնութեան աղբիւրներ դարձան հայ ժողովուրդին համար: Կրթական այս շարժումին մին ընձեռած դիւրութիւններուն միջոցով, հազարաւոր հայեր դաստիարակուեցան: Կրթական այս շարժումին նպաստներէն մին ալ հայ կնոջ իրավիճակի բարեփոխութիւնը հանդիսացաւ: Հայ Աւետարանական դպրոցները հնարաւորութիւն ընծայեցին հայ իգական սեռի բարձրագոյն ուսման եւ դաստիարակութեան: Բազմաթիւ հայ աղջիկներու առիթ տրուեցաւ իրենց բարձրագոյն ուսումը հայ Աւետարանական վարժարաններու մէջ ստանալու:

Հայ Աւետարանական դպրոցներ արտադրեցին իգական սեռի պատկանող ստուարաթիւ ուսեալներու փաղանգ մը, որոնք իրենց արժանաւոր տեղը գրաւեցին մեր ազգային կեանքի եւ մարդկային ընկերութեան մէջ: Այդ զարգացած կիները՝ իրենց կարգին դաստիարակեցին նոր սերունդներ:

Արդարեւ, հայ Աւետարանական դպրոցներու միջոցով դաստիարակուեցան հազարաւոր հայ տղաք եւ աղջիկներ, որոնք բարեբախտութիւնը ունեցան բարձրագոյն ուսման տիրանալու եւ առաջնորդութիւն հայքայքելու հայ զանգուածներուն:

Դժբախտաբար, սակայն, Առաջին Աշխարհամարտը եւ Հայկական Յեղասպանութիւնը պատճառ հանդիսացան այդ հռչակապ կրթական ցանցի կործանումին: Ի հենուկս այդ սրտակեղեք ողբերգութեան, հայ Աւետարանական համայնքը, ցեղասպանութեան անմիջական յաջորդ տարիներու դաժան ու դժուարին պայմաններու մէջ իսկ, օժտեց Սուրբիոյ եւ Լիբանանի գաղթական հայ գաղութները կրթական նոր օճախներով:

Կրթական մարզը շարունակեց, եւ դեռ կը շարունակէ հանդիսանալ Հայ Աւետարանական Եկեղեցիին մեծագոյն նպաստներէն մէկը հայ ժողովուրդին: Տասնամեակներ շարունակ, հայ Աւետարանական կրթական հաստատութիւնները կը մատուցանեն գնահատելի ծառայութիւն մը հայրենաբնակ եւ Սփիւռքի հայ նոր սերունդներուն:

Ներկայիս, Հայաստանեայց Աւետարանական Եկեղեցին ունի 25 դպրոցներ, որոնք կը տարածուին հայրենիքէն մինչեւ Արտասահմանի հեռաւոր երկրամասերը: Սոյն կրթական հաստատութիւններուն ամէնէն անուանին կը հանդիսանայ Պէյրութի Հայկազեան Համալսարանը, որ Սփիւռքի միակ Հայկական համալսարանն է, եւ կը վայելէ գոյգ հովանաւորութիւնը Մերձաւոր Արեւելքի Հայ Աւետարանական Եկեղեցիներու Միութեան եւ Ամերիկայի Հայ Աւետարանչական Ընկերակցութեան: Թէեւ հայ Աւետարանական հաստատութիւն մըն է, բայց աւելի քան կէս երկվեցեակ կրօններու եւ շուրջ 20 ազգութիւններու պատկանող ուսանողներ կ'աշակերտեն հոն:

Հայ Աւետարանական դպրոցներու աշակերտութեան ջախջախիչ մեծամասնութիւնը (գէթ 90 տոկոս եւ աւելի), կը պատկանի ոչ-աւետարանական յարանուանութիւններուն, որոնցմէ շատեր կրթանպաստ կը ստանան առանց խտրութեան:

Հայ Աւետարանական դպրոցը կարելոր դեր մը կը կատարէ նորընձիւղ հայ սերունդներու համապարփակ ուսում եւ հայեցի դաստիարակութիւն ջամբելով: Անոր նուիրական կոչումն է հայ մանուկը, պատանին եւ երիտասարդը իրենց ինքնութեան տէր դարձնելու եւ հայաճանաչման ճամբով զանոնք անփակտելիօրէն կապուած պահելու հայ մշակոյթին, ինչպէս նաեւ զանոնք խմորելու եւ կոփելու՝ նկարագրով, մտաւոր եւ բարոյական յատկանիշներով օժտուած յանձնառու հայեր դարձնելու: □

\* Վեր. Դոկտ. Վահան Թութիկեան Գործադիր Տնօրէնն է Հայ Աւետարանական Համաշխարհային Խորհուրդին

# THE AMAA - 95 YEARS IN GOD'S MISSION

Rev. Mgrdich Melkonian

**T**he Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) was established in Worcester, MA in 1918 during the Armenian Evangelical Union of America Assembly. We praise God for blessing the AMAA for 95 years and are thankful to all those who contributed to the AMAA's mission during those years. Let us celebrate God's blessings and praise the Blessor throughout this anniversary year, which will be celebrated at the AMAA Annual Dinner in New Jersey on October 18, 2014. This article is inspired by the 95 years of AMAA missionary activities and the history of the organization.

"The word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region." (Acts 13:49) The Almighty God, who created the heavens and the earth, had a purpose in His mind to save humanity from sin and to give them eternal life. He believed in that salvation mission. He was totally committed and was ready to pay the enormous price – His son Jesus Christ – for that mission.

In the first century, the Apostles had the desire, the fire and the zeal to spread the Word and they did. The Apostle Paul, after KNOWING Christ, did not waste an hour, but went on and on preaching the Good News to the world. He was determined and that is why he said, "woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel." (1 Corinthians 9-16)

Do I have the same desire and determination to preach the Gospel? I praise God for all who have the same Mission. In particular, I praise those who established a missionary organization called the Armenian Missionary Association of America 95 years ago. They preached the Gospel using words, hands, time and financial resources. Where are the men like them, who followed the calling of Jesus and the steps of Paul going from one city to another, from one country to another?

The Apostle Paul also challenges me with his incredible self-denial. Most of the time, if not all of the time, we painfully struggle between our comfort and our commitment to the Lord. It is

hard to give up our self and get out of our comfort zone. The world teaches us "first me" – my pleasures, my money, my time, my future. I have found that it is impossible to teach people self-denial. The key is Jesus Christ. When we believe in Him we "see" His self-sacrificial act on the cross. If we follow His example "we can do it THROUGH Him who strengthens us." (Philippians 4-13)

The spiritual life and the prayer life of the Apostles led them to give willingly and joyfully. No one was pushing or demanding them to commit themselves. They never said "am I my brother's keeper?" They took it upon themselves to care for others.

There are many of us who care and give and yet there are many who are indifferent. I believe we are called to be what God intended us to be and in the steps of the Apostles and others who believed in God's mission. Thus were the founders and members of the AMAA who devoted themselves willingly, joyfully and served faithfully these past 95 years. □

## Armenian Evangelical Church of Toronto Seeks Full-time Senior Pastor

**The Armenian Evangelical Church of Toronto, ON, Canada is seeking a full-time Senior Pastor who will oversee the spiritual welfare of the congregation through preaching, teaching, shepherding, discipleship, worship and administration.**

The candidate will have several years of Senior/Lead Pastoral experience with a demonstrative passion and zeal for the Lord and for serving His Church. The Church desires a Senior Pastor who will faithfully serve alongside the Church Council and fellow Elders, as shepherd, in the process of guiding the congregation toward Christ-likeness.

Proficiency in both English and Armenian is a requirement.

All pastoral respondents will remain confidential. Please contact Dikran Kalaydjian via e-mail at [diknar@hotmail.com](mailto:diknar@hotmail.com).



# AMAA Officially Opens West Coast Office

**O**n January 25, the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) officially opened a branch office in Glendale, California, located at 1101 North Pacific Avenue, in the heart of the Armenian Community of the Greater Los Angeles area.

Over 80 people attended the opening ceremony. The guests included AMAA Board members, AEUNA Pastors, Haigazian University Board members, Child and Orphan Care Committee members, representatives from the Diocese and Prelacy and members of the media and local City Council.

Levon Filian, AMAA West Coast Executive Director, welcomed the guests and thanked God for the opportunity to open an office on the West Coast. Rev. Ron Tovmassian, Senior Pastor of the United Armenian Congregational Church of Los Angeles, offered the opening prayer. Rev. Joseph Matossian brought greetings on behalf of the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America and introduced the clergy guests. Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America, conveyed his congratulations and greetings. Rev. Father Ardak Demirjian, representing Archbishop Moushegh Mardirosian, Primate of the Western Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, conveyed the Archbishop's greetings. Rev. Dr. Vahan Tootikian, Executive Director of the Armenian Evangelical World Council, shared his involvement with the AMAA for over 40 years and congratulated the Board for its vision to open an office on the West Coast to better serve the Armenian Community. Rev. Mgrdich Melkonian, AMAA's Interim Executive Director/CEO, and Dr. Joseph Zeronian, AMAA President, shared their heartfelt comments. Harut Sassounian, representing the United Armenian Fund,



*Los Angeles City Councilman Paul Krekorian presented a resolution to the AMAA from the city of Los Angeles. Pictured L to R: Dr. Mihran Agbabian, Rev. Ron Tovmassian, Harut Sassounian, Levon Filian, Councilman Paul Krekorian, Rev. Mgrdich Melkonian and Rev. Joseph Matossian.*

welcomed the AMAA as a longtime partner in serving Armenians.

Los Angeles City Councilman Paul Krekorian presented a resolution to the AMAA from the city of Los Angeles, honoring the AMAA for its extensive humanitarian and Christian ministry around the world and congratulated the AMAA for opening an office in Glendale, CA. The closing prayers and the Lord's Prayer were offered jointly by all the clergy present.

Following the ceremonies, the guests were invited to a reception, toured the facilities, and congratulated each other and the



*L to R: Rev. Ron Tovmassian, Rev. Joseph Matossian, Harut Sassounian and Archbishop Hovnan Derderian.*

community for a new chapter of AMAA's ministry and service in the Greater Los Angeles area. □

# AMAA and Lark Present Sublime Inspiration

Dr. Nazareth Darakjian

**A**fter a warm and dry winter, the skies finally opened up in Southern California on the last day of February 2014. The torrents of rain, however, could not stop over 500 enthusiastic attendees and over 130 performers from gathering at the majestic First United Methodist Church of Pasadena for a musical celebration that has become an annual ritual. This celebration is the sacred music concert that the Lark Musical Society presents in collaboration with the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) for the last 17 years.

The program started with the welcoming words of Committee Chairman Dr. Nazareth Darakjian. He thanked Maestro Vatsche Barsoumian for his lifelong dedication to the teaching and performance of music and especially sacred music. He also thanked the performers, some of whom had flown long distances to participate in the program, like Shoushig Barsoumian flying all the way from Romania and Garineh Avakian coming from Texas. Dr. Darakjian also thanked the sponsors whose donations year after year make this concert possible. He then invited Rev. Mgrdich Melkonian, Interim Executive Director/ CEO of the AMAA, to begin the evening with a word of prayer.

The musical program started with the overture from Verdi's opera *La Forza del Destino* which set the stage for the drama that was to follow later in the program. Shoushig Barsoumian then took the stage and sang the beautiful soprano aria "Caro Nome" from another Verdi opera named *Rigoletto*. Shoushig's vocal rendition of the aria was nothing short of perfect; her facial expressions and body language enabled us to understand the meaning of her words perfectly even though she was singing in Italian. This was followed by a quartet from the same opera with Shoushig and Garineh singing soprano and alto respectively

with tenor Raffi Kerbabian and base Ara Kourouian. This quartet is one of the most difficult in Verdi's operas and yet it was performed meticulously and also beautifully.

Next on the program was Khachatourian's piano concerto, a virtuoso tour de force very well known all over the world and one of the best piano concertos written in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Seventeen year old Allen Dishigrikyan, a recent graduate of the piano program of the Lark Conservatory, gave a breathtaking performance with exceptional technique and deep sensitivity to the Armenian themes embedded in the texture of the music. The audience was simply mesmerized and as the final notes died down there came thunderous applause and a standing ovation. We are confident that Allen will continue to wow international audiences as he pursues his career as a pianist.

After the intermission, the 75 member choir took the stage with the four soloists in front of the orchestra to perform one of Mozart's best loved works, his *Great Mass in C minor*. Once again, soprano Shoushig Barsoumian displayed her fabulous agility in singing the notes as well as her luscious tone, doing full justice to the "Laudamus te" and the "Et incarnatus est." For the "Domine Deus" she was joined by Mezzo-soprano Garineh Avakian with her beautiful dark low notes complimenting Shoushig's bright high notes. Raffi Kerbabian then joined them for the "Quoniam tu solus" with his beautiful tenor voice and finally base Ara Kourouian joined them for the "Benedictus qui venit." In between these arias the choir performed the choruses filling the majestic sanctuary with Mozart's beautiful music and raising to God the sacred prayers of the "Mass." The program ended with the energetic "Hosanna in Excelsis" sung by the choir and soloists. □





# REV. HAIG KHERLOPIAN ORDAINED AS PASTOR IN NEW YORK

**O**n Sunday, December 15, Haig Kherlopian was ordained as Pastor of the Armenian Evangelical Church of New York. Over 200 people were in attendance, including members of the Church, family, friends and clergy from other sister churches. A reception followed the service.

The son of Avedis and Ruby Kherlopian, Rev. Kherlopian is a graduate of the Princeton Theological Seminary with a Master of Divinity degree. He also holds a Bachelor's degree from American University and has studied philosophy and religion at London's Kings College.

The ordination service was presided over by Rev. L. Nishan Bakalian, Moderator of the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America and Pastor of the Armenian Martyrs' Congregational Church in Havertown, PA.

Also participating were Rev. Dr. Peter Doghramji, former Pastor (now retired) of the Armenian Evangelical Church, NY; Rev. Mgrdich Melkonian, Interim Executive Director/CEO of the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA); Rev. Berj Gulleyan, Pastor of the Armenian Presbyterian Church, Paramus, NJ; and Rev. Kevin M. Fiedler, guest Minister of the Armenian Evangelical Church, NY.

Clergy from neighboring churches included the Very Rev. Fr. Daniel Findikyan, Executive Director of the Armenian Diocese's Zohrab Information Center, and Professor of Liturgical Studies at St. Nersess Armenian Seminary; Rev. Fr. Mesrob Lakissian, Pastor of the St. Illuminator's Armenian Cathedral, NY; Rev. Fr. Bedros Kadehjian, visiting Pastor of the Holy Cross Armenian Church, NY; and Deacon Shant Kazanjian, Director of the Armenian Religious Education Council (AREC),



*Pastors participating in the ordination service of Rev. Haig Kherlopian: L to R: Rev. Berj Gulleyan, Rev. Kevin Fiedler, Rev. L. Nishan Bakalian, Rev. Mgrdich Melkonian and Rev. Dr. Peter Doghramji.*

Armenian Prelacy (Eastern Region). Also present was Tigran Samvelian, Deputy Permanent Representative of Armenia's Mission to the United Nations. □

## *My Life Journey: Rev. Dr. Vahan H. Tootikian's Latest Book*

Reviewed by Dr. Robert Kachadourian

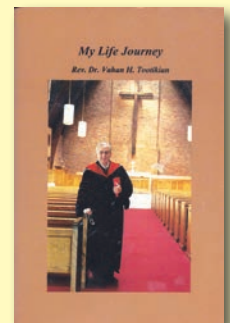
**I**n January 2014, the Armenian Heritage Committee published Rev. Dr. Vahan H. Tootikian's 36th book entitled *My Life Journey*. The book is a compilation of the walk of a clergyman, author, educator, lecturer and family man. These are only a few of the roles Rev. Dr. Tootikian has had. To list the others would be a book that would fill many journeys.

Rev. Dr. Tootikian's birthplace, Kessab, has not only a strategic historical location but is described as a wonderful place to grow up. Education has always been important even from the earliest days of Rev. Dr. Tootikian's journey. His joy for learning literally "jumps" out at the reader. It is almost a "Joie de vivre."

A portion of the book is almost like reading the current events of that particular period. Rev. Dr. Tootikian's experiences are very enlightening and give the reader the actual history of what happened through the eyes of someone who was there. Other aspects of *My Life Journey* encapsulate Rev. Dr. Tootikian's experiences in his pastorates from Damascus to Detroit.

Rev. Dr. Tootikian has served the Armenian community in any area possible wherever he has gone. The overall Armenian entity of the places he's served has been enriched. In *My Life Journey* one isn't merely taken through the various pastorates in which he served. It's an exemplification of his role not only as a "lifelong learner" but accomplishments in academia as well. It's a study in service through committees, councils, seminars, forums and a plethora of groups all dedicated to the betterment of mankind.

This autobiographical 394 page hardcover book may be ordered from the Armenian Heritage Committee, 3922 Yorba Linda Boulevard, Royal Oak, MI 48073.



# ALBERT MOMJIAN, ESQ. RECEIVES JUDGE LEARNED HAND AWARD

**A**lbert Momjian, Esq., a longtime member, Board member and supporter of the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA), was honored with the Judge Learned Hand Award at a dinner at The Rittenhouse Hotel in Philadelphia on February 5.

The annual Award was created to cite leaders in the legal profession for excellence and for their contributions to the legal community. The recipients of this prestigious Award embody much of what Judge Hand represented – the right of the individual and the importance of democratic values in an orderly society. Past recipients of the Award include Edward G. Rendell, former Governor of Pennsylvania, and Lynne Abraham, former District Attorney of Philadelphia.

Among those present to celebrate were Mr. Momjian's entire family – his wife Esther, daughter Carol, sons Mark and Thomas, brother Set and his wife Joan, his cousin Arthur and nephew Christopher. Representing the AMAA were AMAA Board President Joseph Zeronian and his wife Marilyn, Louis and Grace Kurkjian, AMAA Interim Executive Director/CEO Rev. Mgrdich Melkonian, Harry and Eileen Stephey, David and Luiza Aynejian, and Rev. L. Nishan Bakalian, Pastor of Mr. Momjian's church, the Armenian Martyrs' Congregational Church in Havertown, PA, and the Pastor's wife, Maria.

Mr. Momjian, who earned both his undergraduate and law degrees from Columbia University, is a nationally renowned family lawyer, regarded as the Dean of the Pennsylvania family law bar. After practicing law for over 50 years, he recently retired as a Partner from Schnader Harrison Segal & Lewis, LLP, where

he was Chair of the Family Law Department. Author of hundreds of articles on family law, Mr. Momjian's landmark Treatise,

*Pennsylvania Family Law*, is frequently cited by Pennsylvania's appellate courts. He is annually named a Pennsylvania Super Lawyer as well as being listed in *The Best Lawyers in America* for family law for three decades. Among his many honors, he has received the Cecil B. Moore Award from the Barristers' Association of Philadelphia, the Eric D. Turner Award from the Pennsylvania Bar Association's Family Law Section for outstanding service as a teacher and mentor, and the Columbia University Alumni Medal for Distinguished Service.

Mr. Momjian is known and loved for his community involvement and philanthropy. He serves as Honorary Consul to the Republic of Haiti, coming to the aid of the country and its expatriates following the devastating 2010 earthquake. He has been very active with many Armenian organizations including the AMAA where he served as President, Solicitor and on the Board of Directors.

In addition to the AMAA, the dinner was supported by the Stephen Philibosian Foundation, the George and Alice Philibosian Family Foundation and Phillips Law Partners, LLP. □



## Merdinian Celebrates Renovation of School Hall

**O**n December 13, the C. & E. Merdinian Armenian Evangelical School Board of Directors hosted its annual Christmas party for faculty, staff, the PTO and the Women's Auxiliary in the School's newly renovated Hall. The event also served as the official opening of the School's newly renovated social hall, named the Jambazian-Derian Assembly Hall. Renovation of the hall was made possible by a generous donation from Mrs. Anahis Derian Boolghoorjian.

Rita Menesian, Board member and Personnel Committee Chair, welcomed everyone and Dr. Vahe Nalbandian, Chairman of the Board, thanked Mrs. Derian-Boolghoorjian for her support of the project. The renovated hall's new stage will allow enhanced programs in the arts, science fairs, and other fields. After the presentations, Dr. Nalbandian invited Mr. and Mrs. Aram and Anahis Boolghoorjian to come forward to cut the cake. Mrs. Anahis Derian Boolghoorjian thanked the Board for this honor and expressed her joy for being part of this major project of the school. Following the dinner, the guests sang Christmas carols, led by Rev. Vatche and Mrs. Lena Ekmekjian.



**L to R: Dr. Vahe Nalbandian, Anahis and Aram Boolghoorjian**



# AEUNA Celebrates the Love of Christ

**T**he Armenian Evangelical Union of North America (AEUNA) sponsored a Banquet on February 1 at the Armenian Cilicia Evangelical Church in Pasadena, CA to celebrate the Love of Christ. Approximately 200 guests enjoyed this exciting event.

Rev. Hendrik Shanazarian, Pastor of the Holy Trinity Armenian Evangelical Church in Glendale, CA, welcomed the guests and Rev. Daniel Albarian, Pastor of the Christian Outreach for Armenians in Glendale, CA, served as Master of Ceremonies. Rev. George Terian, Pastor of the host Church, offered the invocation. Garo Sulahian sang both the American and Armenian National Anthems and later entertained the guests with Christ-centered worship songs and Armenian folk music.

A series of testimonies were offered in response to the question, "What does the AEUNA mean to me?" They were presented by David Azizian, Youth Pastor of the Armenian Evangelical Church of Hollywood, Rev. Jason Matossian, Pastor

of Parish Development at the United Armenian Congregational Church in Los Angeles, and Rev. Ara Chakerian, Pastor of Holy Trinity Armenian Church in North Hollywood.

Levon Filian, West Coast Executive Director of the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA), brought greetings and introduced Dr. Joseph Zeronian, President of the AMAA Board of Trustees, and other members of the AMAA Board as well as AMAA West Coast staff members Louisa Janbazian and Nora Matossian.

The keynote address was given by AMAA Board member the Honorable Alice Altoon, retired Los Angeles Superior Court Judge. Her message was inspiring and deeply meaningful as she reflected on the love that God has shown to us and



*Rev. Joseph Matossian and Judge Alice Altoon pictured with the framed hand embroidered cross.*

how in turn we must love one another. She shared this message in a truly heartfelt manner. Judge Altoon was presented with a framed, hand-embroidered cross by Roseanne Saliba.

Rev. Joseph Matossian thanked the guests and thanked the Church for hosting the event. Mr. Sulahian sang a special rendition of the Hayr Mer, followed by the singing of the Doxology. Rev. Berj Djambazian, Founding Pastor of the Holy Trinity Armenian Evangelical Church, offered the Benediction. □





# West Coast Visitations and Meetings

*We are grateful to God for the opportunity to better serve the AMAA partners in California. With the opening of a West Coast office, we are able to visit our churches more frequently and meet with the many supporters.*

*We thank all of you who welcomed us in your churches and your homes to participate in our ministries. We look forward to many more visitations with our churches, our mission committees and our friends to pray, plan and participate in His kingdom.*



***L to R: Rev. Joseph Matossian, Archbishop Moushegh Mardirosian, Primate of the Western Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, and Levon Filian***



***Rev. Mgrdich Melkonian speaking during the United Armenian Congregational Church's Missions luncheon on March 9, 2014.***



***L to R: Elizabeth Agbabian, Former First Lady of Republic of Armenia Lyudmila Ter-Petrossian, Levon Filian and Joyce Stein. Photo taken by Joyce Boghosian at Child and Orphan Care event.***



***Levon Filian with Dr. Mihran and Elizabeth Agbabian.***



***Levon Filian with Rev. Douglas Garrard (Joe and Joyce Stein's Pastor) of the Palm Desert Community Presbyterian Church.***



***L to R: Levon Filian, Nora Nazarian, Joe and Joyce Stein***





*AMAA Sunday Luncheon at St. Nareg Armenian Church. Nelly Astorian from France, a recipient of the Armenian version of "Our Daily Bread" booklet published by the AMAA, sharing her testimony.*



*L to R: George Phillips, Sr., Esq., Levon Filian and Dr. Jack Sheen*



*At Armenian Evangelical Brethren Church. Pictured L to R: Rev. Joseph Matossian, Levon Filian, Rev. Dikran Shanlian and Movses Kasparian*



*At St. Nareg Armenian Church. Pictured L to R: Garo Sulahian, Levon Filian, Rev. Joseph Matossian and Pastor Joseph Garabedian*



*At Armenian Cilicia Evangelical Church. Pictured L to R: Armen Aroyan, Levon Filian and Dikran Khanjian.*

## Joint ventures with other organizations

On March 17, Board members from the Gertmenian Foundation and the Plassticos Foundation, met with AMAA West Coast Executive Director Levon Filian, and ARDA President Stan Lazarian to discuss how to better serve the Armenians in Armenia and Lebanon by providing medical/surgical procedures on children with cleft palates in Armenia, and helping the Gertmenian School in Lebanon.

We thank God for giving us the opportunity to work together with these organizations.

*L to R: Dr. Larry Nitcher, Stan Lazarian, Levon Filian, Steve Lazarian, Ruth Ann Burns, Dr. Robert Gertmenian Burns, Joanne Horowitz, Dr. Jed Horowitz, Susi Gertmenian and Dennis Gertmenian*







# ***SUMMER 2014***

*It's Camp Time in Armenia and Karabagh*

## **Thousands of children in Armenia and Karabagh**

look forward to spending their summer at Camp Bedrosian and Camp Sheen Shoghig.

AMAA's camping mission enriches the lives of children spiritually, intellectually and physically.

Campers enjoy leisure time in a wholesome environment created especially for them while they learn about the love of God.

The camps provide nutritional meals, sports, arts and crafts, Bible studies, workshops, and first aid training. The children are also taught Armenian Christian songs and sharagans.

## **Please help our children have a great summer!**

They will never forget your love and the positive impact your gift will make on their young lives.

# **YES!**

I will help children in Armenia & Karabagh attend summer camps!

Enclosed is my total gift of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

I will give \_\_\_\_\_ child/children one week of overnight camp for \$70 each.

I will give \_\_\_\_\_ child/children one week of day camp for \$40 each.

I will help children in Armenia & Karabagh attend summer camps!

Please make your tax deductible donation to the AMAA, earmarked for Armenia/Karabagh Summer Camps. Give your gift today! Via Check-mail to: AMAA, 31 West Century Road, Paramus, NJ, 07652. Via Credit/Debit Card-call AMAA: 201-265-2607. Online-visit: [amaa.org](http://amaa.org)



# Child and Orphan Care

## Luncheon, Fashion Show in LA a Huge Success

Spectacular, amazing, fun and colorful were some of the adjectives used to describe the AMAA Child and Orphan Care Luncheon and Fashion Show, held February 22 at the Beverly Hills Hotel in Beverly Hills, CA. The event was Co-Chaired this year by Alice Chakrian and Eileen Keusseyan and attended by over 500 guests.

As the guests arrived, they were greeted with a display of Silent Auction items, a Child Sponsorship table and the Assistance for Syrian Refugees in Armenia table where they could show their support of AMAA programs.

The guests entered the Crystal Ballroom to the sounds of "It's a Small World After All" and the vision of children dancing around a globe. Hot air balloons, vibrant floral bouquets and colorful flags on the centerpieces captured the theme. It was indeed a gathering for Children by Children in this small world of ours.

Among the guests was Lyudmila Ter-Petrosian, former First Lady of the Republic of Armenia.

David Muncherian shared his impressions of the plight of the Armenian people and delivered the devotional based on Matthew 5:14-16. Mrs. Varant (Hoori) Melkonian gave

a firsthand emotional speech on the living conditions of our children in Armenia. A video titled "A Day in the Life of an AMAA Relief Worker" depicted five families who receive assistance from the AMAA. Maro Yacoubian made a plea for support of the AMAA's Child Sponsorship Program.

The Fashion Show opened with a musical presentation of a Scandinavian and an Armenian song which joined together two beautiful Armenian girls wearing their national costumes. The Karavan Dance Company presented a dance performance of "It's a Small World



*Christina Jabarian, Betty Balian and Caroline Tufenkian, the Fashion Show Co-Chairs with the store manager of Bloomingdales.*

After All," with international costumes worn by the children. The finale featured a five year old boy dancing to Armenian music to the delight of the audience.

The Fashion Show was presented by Bloomingdale's Sherman Oaks and narrated by Megan Tevrizian of NBC San Diego. Eighty children served as models with the finale presenting international flags which united everyone in the Armenian heritage and identity.

Arsine Phillips and Lori Muncherian, Co-Chairs of the AMAA Los Angeles Child and Orphan Care Committee, stated that this was a record year for the event. They wish to thank Jessica Vartoughian, LindaKay Abdulian and Bloomingdale's for the gift bag items, David Z Flowers for the flowers, Ani Zakari for the goody bags for the models, and Luncheon Co-Chairs Alice Chakrian and Eileen Keusseyan, Fashion Show Co-Chairs Betty Balian, Christina Jabarian and Caroline Tufenkian and Silent Auction Co-Chairs Nicole Nishanian and Leslie Shahinian for their hard work and devotion to the mission of the AMAA and the children of Armenia.

Videos of the event can be purchased online at [www.arkaphoto.com](http://www.arkaphoto.com) or by calling 323-660-7573. A percentage of all sales will go toward AMAA programs in Armenia. □



*L to R: Alice Chakrian, Arsine Phillips, Joyce Stein, Lori Muncherian, and Eileen Keusseyan*



*L to R: Nicole Nishanian and Leslie Shahinian, Silent Auction Co-Chairs*

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# Visit with a Sponsored Child

*The following was taken from an inspiring presentation made by Mrs. Varant (Hoori) Melkonian, at the Child and Orphan Care Luncheon and Fashion Show. Hoori shared her eye witness experience of her visit to Armenia where she met the child she had sponsored so many years before. She encouraged everyone to support these needy children in Armenia.*

"Seven years ago I attended the AMAA Luncheon and Fashion Show with my son Aren, who was six years old and who modeled in the Fashion Show, and my daughter Arlene. Arlene picked up the Child Sponsorship Program cards on the table, read them, and asked me to sponsor a specific child, a boy named Davit. Six years later, my daughter was in the eleventh grade and was having a school trip to Armenia. While preparing for the trip, I received a letter from the AMAA asking for my annual contribution for my sponsored child. I thought why not make the trip an opportunity to meet my sponsored child and to show my son the reason he modeled so many years ago. I called the AMAA and received the contact information.

After we arrived in Armenia, the AMAA office suggested that we visit Davit at his school. Once there we met his mother and an AMAA volunteer. His mother picked him up at school and we drove to their house together. David did not smile once, while his mother was happy to meet us. He was quiet and reserved and his mother's health was very poor. Their living conditions were not good with humid walls and a bathroom with no running water.

When Davit left school I noticed he was carrying his school materials in a grocery bag. I presented gifts to him, mostly clothes, but he didn't show much interest, until I gave him a small sports bag which I had with me. Together we put all of his school items inside and for the first time I saw him smile. We also gave Davit a Lego set and my son had an opportunity to play with him.

When we left we were filled with sadness and tears. To witness the way our people live in our homeland in this day and age with conditions worse than I had witnessed in the Middle East 30 years ago was heartbreaking. They live on the other side of the world, but it is our Motherland.

As a sponsor, all I had to do was write a check once a year and send it to the AMAA. But it is not just about one sponsor or one child; it's about our collective effort. With all of our blessings and fortunes, it is easy to forget the desperate needs of people who aren't around us. I realized that every penny I spend to sponsor Davit is worthwhile and valuable to the family. I realized how far the AMAA has come in sharing their love and care for Armenians in need. I realized the joy I feel that I am a participant in this humane cause.

The AMAA has not forgotten about our people and reminds us of the importance of partnering in support of Armenian children. I encourage each of you to pick up a card and be inspired to sponsor a child and support this noble mission of the AMAA."



*LA area Child and Orphan Care Committee members.*



# Christmas Programs in Armenia and Karabagh

**D**uring Christmas 2013-2014, AMAA Armenia and the Evangelical Church of Armenia (ECA) organized 40 Christmas programs in 31 towns and villages throughout Armenia and Karabagh. Over 7,400 children and 15,000 parents participated in these programs, which are designed to bring Christmas cheer and to educate children, many of whom live in remote regions and are rarely exposed to the arts or to the Gospel.

Each year the Christmas programs proclaim the meaning of the birth of Christ in creative, joyous, colorful, and instructive ways. Some of the programs feature plays, such as the "Forest Fairy Tale" in Stepanavan and the "Holiday Tree Star" in Gyumri and others

feature songs such as the Christmas performance in Alaverdy. In Karabagh, Vanadzor and Ijevan the birth of Christ was portrayed on stage followed by singing and dancing. Santa made an appearance at many of the programs and helped distribute presents to the children.

Many donors, volunteers, Christian Education workers and leaders are responsible for bringing Christmas joy to the children in Armenia. The AMAA sincerely appreciates their hard work and fundraising efforts to reach out to these children and their families as they heard and experienced the Christmas message of God's love. □



*Christmas in Tashir*



*Christmas in Goris*



*Christmas in Gyumri*



*Christmas in Yerevan*





## Chess Prodigy Siranoush Ghukasian Continues to Make Us Proud

**O**n January 21, 13 year old Siranoush Ghukasian (pictured on the left), who is part of the Armenian Missionary Association of America's Child Sponsorship Program in Armenia, took third place in the 69<sup>th</sup> Women's Chess Championship of Armenia.

At the end of the final round, three chess players tied at seven points each, and the winner was decided by the number of pieces still in play. Shushanna Sargsyan was the winner with Maria Gevorgyan placing second and Siranoush coming in third. This was not Siranoush's first time placing in the chess championship. She has been competing for many years and took first place in 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2012.

Siranoush has been in the AMAA Child Sponsorship Program since she was four years old. Always a bright girl, she discovered early on a particular love and talent for chess. She is from the town of Vayk where she started playing chess at the age of three, with the help of her uncle. Siranoush began attending the Chess Academy at the age of six. In 2006, she began participating in world, European and Asian regional contests and has competed in and won prizes in Italy, Croatia, Montenegro, Herzegovina, Vietnam, Turkey and Georgia.

Siranoush is now preparing to travel to Moscow for an open chess contest. The AMAA is proud and thankful to be part of Siranoush's success and wishes her God's blessing as she continues to grow into a young woman.



## Arevig Bookstore and Exhibition Open in Athens, Greece

**T**he opening ceremony of the Arevig Bookstore and the Exhibition of Books was held December 1 at the Armenian Evangelical Church of Athens, Greece under the auspices of the Armenian Ambassador. Many members and friends of the Church were present including Deputy Ambassador Minas Mardigian and his wife Mariam Haroutunian, Father Hovhannes Saghdejian, Father Nareg Shahinian, representatives from Armenian organizations and schools, and the Editor of "Azad Or," the Armenian newspaper.

Rev. Vicken Cholakian, Pastor of the Church, welcomed the guests and presented the history of the Bookstore, which was a dream of his late wife, Salpi Cholakian. He thanked all who supported this important project.



*Ribbon cutting by Rev. Vicken Cholakian (left) and Deputy Ambassador Minas Mardigian.*

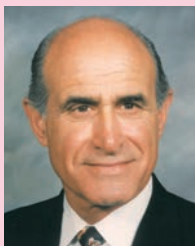


After a program, presented by the students from the Armenian Evangelical Kindergarten and the ribbon cutting by Rev. Cholakian and Deputy Ambassador Mardigian, the guests were invited to Haigazian Hall to browse over 450 books and DVDs which were on display. The Arevig Bookstore is open to the public every day from 9am to 12 noon.



## ERNEST BEDROSIAN

Ernest Armen Bedrosian (Ernie), a longtime supporter of the Armenian Missionary Association and a leader in the California raisin industry, passed away on January 1, 2014 in Fowler, CA. He was 80.



Ernie was born in Parlier, CA to Murad and Elizabeth Bedrosian, who were both survivors of the Armenian Genocide. He graduated from Fresno State College with a bachelor's degree in agriculture. After college he joined the US Army and became a food specialist. In 1958 he started working on the family raisin and wine vineyard with his father and brothers Krikor and Kenny. A few years later he began serving on various raisin boards and committees and met many leaders in the raisin industry. These contacts and ideas led him to form the Raisin Bargaining Association in 1966, serving as the first president. He successfully guided the Association through its early years and with price negotiations with the raisin packers and today the Association is the most successful and largest bargaining association in the country.

During the 1960s, the family started expanding its farming operation as well as purchasing vineyards in the Fowler area. In 1969 they, along with a partner, opened the National Raisin Company and developed the "Champion" brand a few years later. Today, the National Raisin Company has grown into the largest independent raisin, prune and dried fruit operation in the world.

Ernie was not only a great businessman, whose word was his bond and who loved the raisin industry, but he was also a great husband, father and grandfather. He and his wife Carlotta celebrated their 57th wedding anniversary in 2013 and worked together at the National Raisin Company for over 39 years. He was also a man of strong faith, serving as elder at the First Armenian Presbyterian Church of Fresno and serving on the Church's Building Committees.

In addition to Carlotta, he is survived by his son Bryan (Rosie) and daughter Tammy Shegerian (John) and his grandchildren Courtney, Tyler and Armen (Stephanie), and great granddaughter Lillian. He is also survived by his sister Clara Bousian, brother Krikor (Katherine) and Kenny (Jane) along with his nephews Michael (Stephanie) and Paul (Teresa) and his nieces LindaKay Abdulian (Dr. John) and Jane Asmar (Dr. Scott).

A funeral service was held on January 11 at the First Armenian Presbyterian Church in Fresno, CA. The family requests that donations may be made in his memory to the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) for the Bedrosian Shushi Camp. □

## SEB GERTMENIAN

Seb Avadis Gertmenian of Pasadena, CA passed away on December 8, 2013 at the age of 101.



Born in Hadjin, Turkey to the late Avadis Mardiros and Zahouhie Pampayan Gertmenian, he came to the United States through Ellis Island in 1923 when he was 10 years old. His family settled in Pasadena where he attended Pasadena schools and graduated from John Muir Technical High School. His love of music, drama and gardening developed at an early age. Numerous relatives remember how much they enjoyed playing in the gardens and ponds he created at his childhood home.

In 1949, Seb purchased Pasadena Wholesale Produce Company, which served a wide variety of foodservice customers in the San Gabriel Valley for over 50 years. The beginnings of ReadyPac Produce were founded in the back of the Pasadena Produce warehouse in 1968. Seb was Chairman Emeritus of ReadyPac and retired from the business in 1994 at age 82.

Seb was a generous community leader and fundraiser throughout his life beginning with the Boy Scouts of America. He was a life member of the Kiwanis Club where he was remembered for his famous "Shish Kabob Dinners" held annually for over 50 years to raise money for scholarships. In 1972, the Kiwanis Club declared Seb "The Greatest Shish Kabob Cook in the World." Seb also hosted annual shish kabob dinners for the Optimist Club, where he served as President and was a member for 48 years. The YMCA, where he was a lifelong member of the Y's Men's, declared him their "Honorary Chef" in 1995. As a member of the Knights of Vartan and past Commander from 1981-1983, Seb raised scholarship money for aspiring Armenian students. In 1978, he was awarded Honorary Life Member of the Tournament of Roses. He was an active member of his church, the Armenian Cilicia Evangelical Church of Pasadena and served as its Chairman of the Board of Trustees. In 1990, he established the Armenian Development Fund to promote jobs in Armenia. In 1994, Seb received the "Spud King" award for his outstanding work in the russet potato industry. In 2008, Seb received the 43rd "Others Award" from the Salvation Army and in 2013, he received his 70 Year pin from the Elks Club.

He was preceded in death by his first wife, Betty Knadjian and daughter Georgia

Runge-Smith. In 1978, Seb married Alice Nouskajian and had a great life with her for 35 years until her passing in 2012. He is survived by his sons Dr. L. Wayne Gertmenian (Cindy) and Dennis Gertmenian (Susan), stepchildren Linda Hughes (Louie) and Gary Nouskajian (Kitty), fourteen grandchildren, nine great grandchildren and many loving relatives and friends.

A memorial service was held at the Armenian Cilicia Evangelical Church in Pasadena on December 14. The family requests that memorial donations be made to the Gertmenian Foundation (180 S. Lake Avenue, Suite 405, Pasadena, CA 91101) which will distribute the donations to Seb's favorite charities – the Armenian Missionary Association of America, Armenian Cilicia Evangelical Church and the Salvation Army. □

## DONALD C. GOODROW

Donald Cecil Goodrow of Agoura Hills, CA passed away on January 15, 2014. He was 84.



Born in Owensmouth, CA, Don graduated from Canoga Park High School in 1948 and proudly served in the US Navy in Korea from 1949-53. He was a Los Angeles City fireman from 1953-73. With his wife, Dolly, Don founded and owned the Hillside Rubbish Company from 1958-99. He served on the California Refuse Removal Council and helped write the recycling laws in California. He also served on the Calabasas Chamber of Commerce for several years and was President in 1967.

Don was very involved in the Armenian community, participating in the Thousand Oaks/Spitak Armenia Sister City Program from 1988-2011 and working with the Armenian Ararat Home, the Armenian Orphans Fund and St. Peters Armenian Church. His love for Armenia and his eagerness to help others took him to Armenia many times.

He is survived by his wife of 62 years Rosalyn "Dolly", son Brad, daughter Donnell Nichols (Bill), three grandchildren, Ryan, Tyler and Katie, and his brothers Marvin and Richard.

Services were held at St. Peters Armenian Church in Van Nuys, CA on January 25. The family requests that memorial donations may be made to the Armenian Missionary Association of America. □

## STEPHEN MAZUJIAN

Stephen E. Mazujian of Teaneck, NJ passed away on January 7, 2014 in Siem Reap, Cambodia. He was 56.

Son of Joseph and the late Ann Mazujian, Stephen was born in Belleville, NJ and graduated summa cum laude with an accounting degree from Fairleigh Dickinson University. He also received an MBA from Columbia University and worked for Deloitte and Touche for 35 years, rising to the level of Partner.

Stephen left this life at the topmost level of the Angkor Wat Temple in Cambodia at a place considered by many to be a passageway to Heaven. He was doing what he loved, traveling the world with his partner, Rob.

In addition to his father Joseph, Stephen is survived by his longtime partner Robert Carter Barefield and his brother David Mazujian.

A memorial service was held at St. John's Episcopal Church in Passaic, NJ on January 15. Memorial donations may be sent to the Armenian Missionary Association of America or to The Hartt School of Music. □



2010. He enjoyed traveling with his wife and playing golf. After retirement, he and his wife spent half of their time in Brussels and half in the desert at Rancho Mirage.

Henri was always interested in the mission and ministry of the AMAA and supported it both financially and by serving on several committees. He will be missed by his many friends and AMAA committee members.

He is survived by his wife, Nora. □

## SELA NAZARIAN

Sela Nazarian of Union City, NJ passed away on August 24, 2013.

Sela was the daughter of Brother Apraham Seferian, a strict fundamental Bible believer, who founded the Evangelical Brotherhood Bible Church in Aleppo, Syria in 1924 which has now spread to all continents in the world. She had two important God-given gifts – music and teaching which she used throughout her life. Sela, whose name is a musical expression mentioned in the Old Testament, served a total of 54 years as a teacher and spent 70 years as a volunteer playing the organ and piano and directing choirs in churches.

She began her teaching career in 1944 when her father established a school in Aleppo which was called School of Life where she taught for 23 years. When the family moved to Beirut, Lebanon, she became Principal of the elementary section of the High School of Life, which her father also founded. In 1971, she co-founded the School of Light in Beirut and served there one year before leaving to teach at the Armenian Evangelical Torosian School in Nor Amanos (Beirut) for nine years. She immigrated to the United States and began teaching the Armenian language in the Saturday School at the Holy Cross Armenian Apostolic Church in Union City, NJ for 17 years.

Along with Christian education, Sela tried to build good character in her students teaching them faithfulness, politeness, etiquette, punctuality, cleanliness, responsibility, thankfulness, honesty and discipline. She was a popular teacher. Many of her students called her their second mother and a number of her former students named their daughters after her. She always gave Bibles to her doctors, nurses, dentists, and her clients and spoke to them about Jesus.

Sela is survived by her husband, Antranig (Andy) Nazarian. The funeral service was held at the Grove Reformed Church in North Bergen, NJ on August 27 and a memorial service was held on September 29 at the Armenian Presbyterian Church, Paramus, NJ. □



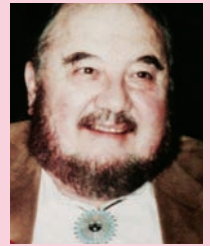
## MICHAEL KALAJIAN

Michael Kalajian of Bedford, MA, formerly of Lexington and Newton, MA, passed away on January 29, 2014.

Son of the late Misak and Victoria Kalajian, Michael was an avid supporter of the Armenian Children's Milk Fund for many years. He and his wife, Seta, dedicated much of their time and energy to fundraising efforts for this project and encouraged their family to participate as well. In recent years, Michael enjoyed seeing three generations of Kalajians helping out at Milk Fund events.

He was predeceased by his parents and his sister Gloria. He is survived by his beloved wife Seta (Nalbandian), his sons Michael (Sonya) and Gary (Tami), and his grandchildren Tyler, Taleen, Jamie and Kaitlin.

The family requests that donations in his memory be made directly to the Armenian Children's Milk Fund, P.O. Box 652, Belmont, MA 02478 or to the Armenian Missionary Association of America c/o the Armenian Milk Fund. □



## HENRI NAZARIAN

Henri Nazarian, a member of the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) Near East Committee, passed away in June 2013 in Rancho Mirage, CA following complications from a stroke. He was 83.

Henri was born in Aleppo, Syria to Mihran and Lydia Barsoumian, both proud Aintabtsis. He attended the Armenian Evangelical Emmanuel School in Aleppo. Around 1950, the family moved to Beirut, Lebanon and Henri attended the American University of Beirut (AUB), graduating from the School of Engineering. In 1957, he married Nora Bezjian and they had two children, Michael and Sandra.

After graduation he was offered a teaching position at AUB and in 1964, he began working for Exxon's headquarters in the Middle East. Henri spoke several languages and had the skills of a salesman. He was promoted to be one of Exxon's top sales representatives in the Middle East.

At the onset of the civil war in Lebanon in 1975, he and his family moved to Athens, Greece for two years and then to Brussels, Belgium, where he retired from Exxon in



The AMAA Board of Directors and staff also wish to extend their heartfelt condolences to the families of the following deceased friends whose names were submitted to us for publication in the AMAA NEWS.

- \* **Jacob Almoyan**  
*Clarksville, GA*
- \* **Alice Gedikian**  
*Arcadia, CA*
- \* **Ohanes Megerian**
- \* **Ronald Karabian**  
*Fresno, CA*
- \* **Lidia Karayan**  
*Fresno, CA*
- \* **Garabed Bedrossian**  
*Los Angeles, CA*
- \* **Ara Derdiarian**  
*Sherman Oaks, CA*
- \* **Leon Buchakjian**
- \* **Zarah Manazaz**
- \* **Luke Arakelian**
- \* **Anahid Kalajian**  
*Rye, NY*
- \* **Jack Der Garabedian**
- \* **Robert Mogavero**  
*Whispering Pines, MA*
- \* **Armeneh Light**
- \* **Carlen Shatakhtsyan**  
*Cranston, RI*
- \* **Albert Darakjian**  
*Westlake Village, CA*

\* *Memorials designated for AMAA*





**Armenian Missionary Association of America**  
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## **Avedisian School students gaze at the prototype of their new school building now under construction**

